Musicians
& Composers
of the 20th Century
Eminem

American rap singer and songwriter

A controversial rap artist, Eminem is noted for his high-energy, witty, and offensive lyrics. As a white musician performing in a genre dominated by black artists, Eminem is often compared to Elvis Presley.

Born: October 17, 1972; St. Joseph, Missouri
Also known as: Marshall Bruce Mathers (birth name); M&M; Slim Shady
Member of: D12

Principal recordings

The Life

Marshall Mathers, who later took the name Eminem (ehm-ih-NEHM), had an unstable childhood, moving repeatedly between Missouri and Michigan. His father left the family shortly after he was born, and his mother, Deborah “Debbie” Mathers, raised him. Eminem had a close relationship with his uncle, Ronald “Ronnie” Polkinghorn, who was only a few months older. One of Eminem’s tattoos and the military identification tags he wears commemorate Polkinghorn’s 1991 suicide.

At school Eminem was the victim of bullying, and one beating left him in a coma for five days. After repeating ninth grade three times, he dropped out of high school, and he held various unfulfilling jobs until his music career became profitable. He maintained a turbulent relationship with Kimberly “Kim” Scott, and they had a daughter, Hailie Jade, in 1995. Many of Eminem’s lyrics refer to the people closest to him: Debbie, Kim, Hailie, and Ronnie.

Eminem spent his teenage years around Detroit, where he began performing hip-hop music with Bassmint Productions, Soul Intent, Royce da 5’9”, and D12. D12, also known as the Dirty Dozen or Detroit 12, comprised six Detroit rappers, with two distinct rap personalities. In this context, Eminem rapped as M&M, for Marshall Mathers (which became Eminem), and Slim Shady. Both names stuck. Eminem’s earliest musical success came in improvisational-rap competitions, called battles, in Detroit, and later Eminem finished second in the 1997 Rap Olympics MC Battle in Los Angeles. Around that time a promotional tape of his performance reached Dr. Dre.

Dr. Dre signed Eminem to his Aftermath record label, and in 1999 he produced Eminem’s first studio album, The Slim Shady LP. The album was an international success. That year Eminem married Kim; they were married for two years before divorcing in 2001, remarrying in 2006, and red divorcing later that year.

Eminem’s subsequent albums were successful, making him one of rap’s best-selling artists. His performance as the lead character in the 2002 film 8 Mile earned some critical acclaim and an Academy Award for Best Song. During his career he served two years of probation, stemming from assault charges, and his mother and his ex-wife, among others, have sued him.

The Music

Eminem developed his signature dense rhyming patterns, frequent use of homonyms, and intricate rhythms through improvised rap battles. An improvisational sound and self-deprecating lyrics were characteristic of his work. While still young he performed on various albums, including the solo Infinite, although these are generally omitted from discussions of his music. His musical reputation rests primarily on the four studio albums he had completed by 2004.

Eminem’s music has been the source of considerable controversy, earning him accusations of misogyny and homophobia as well as rallying cries of artistic freedom. Various works of his have been banned on the radio, MTV, and the Black Entertainment Television (BET), and he appeared before a congressional hearing on violence in the media.

The Slim Shady LP. Produced by Dr. Dre in 1999 and dedicated to Eminem’s daughter Hailie, The Slim Shady LP was Eminem’s first studio album and winner of the Grammy Award for Best Rap Album.
Rappers as role models and the struggles of drug users and poor people are among the main themes of the album. While many of the songs depict scenes that seem real and even autobiographical, one of the last tracks on the album, “I’m Shady,” explains that not all of Eminem’s lyrics are to be taken literally.

“My Name Is” is the hit single from *The Slim Shady LP*, and this introduced Eminem to a wider audience. “Rock Bottom” is set against a hymnlike musical background, but it is about the willingness to commit crimes when there is no hope of a better life. Eminem attempted suicide around the time he recorded this track. The cover art of *The Slim Shady LP* depicts the haunting fantasy that Eminem describes in “‘97 Bonnie & Clyde”: a man and his young daughter disposing of her mother’s body. Distant, minor melodies and the use of a harp create a mysterious, ethereal background while the sounds of waves and of Eminem’s daughter, Hailie, add realism. Tori Amos released a cover of this piece in 2001.

*The Marshall Mathers LP*. In 2000 Eminem released his second studio album, *The Marshall Mathers LP*, which debuted at number one on the *Billboard* charts and earned Eminem his second consecutive Grammy for Best Rap Album. Eminem raps in a more aggressive and angry style on this album. The topic of rappers as role models re-emerges, along with songs about Eminem’s rise to fame. Eminem dedicated the album to daughter Hailie, Polkinghorn, and Cornell Pitts, better known as Bugz, a former D12 rap associate.

The first single released from *The Marshall Mathers LP*, “The Real Slim Shady,” is a catchy, memorable tune that emphasizes the rapper’s name. “Stan” is one of Eminem’s most critically acclaimed raps: The music samples Dido’s “Thank You,” combined with thunder, rain, and the sound of writing on paper, the story unfolding in the form of three letters from an unstable fan named Stan. At the end of the third verse, Stan performs reckless actions described in “My Name Is,” and he ultimately kills himself and his pregnant girlfriend in a scenario similar to the one described in “‘97 Bonnie & Clyde.” The last verse is Eminem’s concerned response that comes too late.

“Lose Yourself.” In 2002 Eminem starred in the motion picture *8 Mile*, which at the time had the largest opening weekend for an R-rated motion picture. Eminem played a white Detroit rapper, Jimmy “B-Rabbit” Smith, although the plot is not strictly autobiographical. The song “Lose Yourself,” which is about Smith’s struggle to become a successful musician, is heard as a work in progress throughout the film, and by the end Smith finishes it. This was Eminem’s first number-one *Billboard* single, holding that position longer than any other song by a rap artist. It was also the first rap song to win an Academy Award for Best Original Song.

*The Eminem Show*. *The Eminem Show* earned the artist his third Grammy Award for Best Rap Album; he was the first person to win the award three times. The album has a more mature sound, with less distortion and more layering, and some of the lyrics (especially in “White America” and “Square Dance”) are more political than in previous albums. However, there is still a personal side: “Hailie’s Song” is about Eminem’s daughter, and “My Dad’s Gone Crazy” features her singing throughout the track. “CLeanin’ Out My Closet” is mostly about Eminem’s mother, but it also contains references to Eminem’s father and uncle.

“Without Me,” a high-energy hit, could be likened to “My Name Is” and “The Real Slim Shady” from previous albums. “Without Me” contains one of the best examples of Eminem’s lyrical virtuosity. After a rapid-fire succession of rhymes woven into a complex pattern, he concludes the second verse with the sound being sent with five different meanings. Rappers as role models is a central theme in “When the Music Stops” and “Sing for the Moment.” The latter rap samples “Dream On” by Aerosmith, and it features Steven Tyler and Joe Perry. Here Eminem offers a coherent defense against the accusations that his music is dangerous for children, and, further, he argues that his music could be beneficial to them and that those who censor his lyrics could be harming children by limiting their artistic outlets.

*Encore*. Dr. Dre served as executive producer for *Encore*, which Eminem released in 2004. Critics attacked *Encore* for being more heavy-handed and less clever than his previous albums. Nevertheless, “Mockingbird” is perhaps Eminem’s most personal and touching rap. While previous albums included a catchy single from the perspective of Slim Shady, *Encore* contains “My First Single,” a blatant
mockery of that formula. Like *The Eminem Show*, *Encore* features some political content. “Mosh,” for instance, is a harsh, detailed criticism of the George W. Bush presidency, and it encourages political activism. The video was released shortly before the 2004 U.S. presidential election as a way to recruit young voters. “Like Toy Soldiers” is a call for an end to violence among rappers. The music is characterized by its persistent, militant snare drum and its sample of “Toy Soldiers” performed by Martika. The music video concludes with images of rappers who had been killed recently: Tupac Shakur, the Notorious B.I.G., Big L, and Bugz, formerly of D12. The video also includes images of the fictional killing of Proof, a member of D12 and the best man in Eminem’s second wedding. In 2006 Proof would, in fact, be shot and killed in a Detroit nightclub.

**Musical Legacy**

Eminem was the first rap artist to win an Academy Award for best song, and he won several Grammy Awards. He is known for his sometimes witty, sometimes tragic lyrics, which feature dense and intricate rhyming patterns. Eminem expanded the traditional topics of rap music to include personal, psychological, and political content rather than the more typical focus on drugs, violence, and women. He responded to critics who accused him of homophobia by performing live with Elton John on “Stan” on numerous occasions. In addition to his musical legacy, Eminem challenged censorship in America and violence among rappers. He was one of the factors in a cultural shift that has turned away from judging rappers by their skin color or violent reputation, paving the way for white rappers such as Paul Wall and Bubba Sparxxx as well as black rappers with nontraditional backgrounds such as Kanye West. Often praised and often attacked, Eminem has been one of the most significant figures in rap music.

*Joseph R. Matson*

**Further Reading**


*See also:* D. M. C.; Dr. Dre; 50 Cent; Hammer, M. C.; Jay-Z; John, Sir Elton; Shakur, Tupac; Simmons, Joseph “Run.”
**Brian Eno**

*English rock singer, songwriter, and keyboard player*

Eno achieved early fame playing synthesizers with the pioneering British glam rock band, Roxy Music. He went on to define the ambient music genre, and he brought his distinctive sound to the production of hit albums for other artists, such as U2, the Talking Heads, and Devo.

**Born:** May 15, 1948; Woodbridge, Suffolk, England

**Also known as:** Brian Peter George St. John le Baptiste de la Salle Eno (full name)

**Member of:** Roxy Music; Fripp and Eno; Portsmouth Sinfonia; Cluster; Harmonia 76; 801

### Principal recordings

**Albums (solo):**

**Albums (with Cluster):**

**Albums (with Fripp and Eno):**

**Albums (with Harmonia 76):**

**Albums (with Portsmouth Sinfonia):**

**Albums (with Roxy Music):**

### The Life

Born in England in 1948, Brian Peter George St. John le Baptiste de la Salle Eno (EE-noh) grew up near a U.S. Air Force base. The sounds of early rock-and-roll and rhythm-and-blues music, with the tight harmonies and nonsense words of doo-wop, coming from Armed Forces Radio provided early inspiration to Eno. He attended the Winchester School of Art at the University of Southampton, where he encountered the music of contemporary composers, including minimalists such as John Cage, Steve Reich, and La Monte Young. He studied avant-garde subjects such as conceptual painting and sound sculpture. In 1967 Eno married Sarah Grenville, and their daughter, Hannah, was born later that year. Eno graduated from college in 1969.

After finishing school, he moved to London, where he cofounded Roxy Music. At first his role was offstage, mixing the band members’ instruments and voices through synthesizers and other electronic devices, occasionally creating loops for live playback on tape recorders. He later joined his bandmates on the stage, where his outrageous make-up and drag costumes helped define the band’s aesthetic. After Roxy Music’s second album, *For Your Pleasure*, came out in 1973, Eno left the band, citing creative differences with the lead singer, Bryan Ferry, and general boredom with the rock-and-roll lifestyle.

Eno immediately embarked on a number of projects, beginning with a collaboration with King Crimson cofounder Robert Fripp. A series of health problems changed Eno’s course, starting with a collapsed lung that forced him to abandon a British tour as front man of a band called the Winkies. A year later, in 1975, Eno was in a car accident, and his injuries left him bedridden. His immobility al-
lowed time for contemplation of the environmental sounds around him, and in this situation Eno’s concept of ambient music was born.

In addition to recording ambient music’s seminal early albums, Eno was collaborating with musicians such as David Bowie, John Cale, and David Byrne. In 1988, after the demise of his first marriage, Eno married his manager, Anthea Norman-Taylor, with whom he had two daughters, Irial and Darla. Solo albums and collaborations continued, and at the same time Eno found success as an installation artist and a video artist. In 1975 Eno published, in conjunction with artist Peter Schmidt, Oblique Strategies, a deck of cards that offers solutions for overcoming creative block. In 1996 Eno founded the Long Now Foundation, which encourages public consideration of the long-term future of society and culture.

The Music

As a teenager, Eno made his first recording: the sound of a pen tapping a tin lampshade. He slowed it down and played it back, and in this way the foundation for his experimental, electronic, and ambient music was laid. For Eno, the tape recorder became an instrument. He was inspired by twentieth century minimalist composers’ reliance on chance, and he used tape-delay feedback systems, synthesizers, and computer-generated compositions. Though his earliest solo albums were oriented toward the pop sound, in the 1970’s Eno created and coined ambient music, that is, music played at a low volume, that alters the experience of the surrounding environment. Eno brought his distinctive, eclectic, and sought-after sound to the production of hit albums by Paul Simon, U2, and Coldplay.

Roxy Music. Roxy Music’s eponymous first album was released in 1972. The band’s music was an amalgamation of postmodernist, art-school, and glam rock. The album contained a variety of cultural references, including to Humphrey Bogart, to the Beatles, and to Richard Wagner’s Ride of the Valkyries (1870). It was recorded in one week’s time, before the band signed a contract with Island Records. Eno sang back-up vocals, and he played the synthesizer, creating weird, atonal noise using tape recorders. With this debut album Roxy Music joined the ranks of the significantly influential avant-garde bands of the era, such as the Velvet Underground and Captain Beefheart, paving the way for subsequent groups that relied on electronics to define their sound, such as the Cars and Devo. When Eno departed Roxy Music after its second album, the remaining band members pursued a raucous, less-cutting-edge sound, becoming known for the polished music of their hit 1982 album, Avalon.

Another Green World. Eno released this solo album in 1975, following two other successful solo albums: Taking Tiger Mountain (By Strategy) and Here Come the Warm Jets. Another Green World was a bridge between the experimental pop that came before it and the ambient music that followed. Nine of the fourteen songs were instrumental, and those that were not contained strange, unconventional lyrics. Though many found the album less accessible than Eno’s prior work, critics and fans praised it. Fripp played guitar, and Eno mixed and distorted that sound with keyboards and complex rhythms.

Brian Eno. (Tobias Schwarz/Reuters/Landov)
Genesis member and future solo artist Phil Collins played drums on three tracks, and Velvet Underground cofounder Cale played viola. The textures of the sounds on Another Green World create a haunting, lovely album that is widely considered to be one of Eno’s masterpieces.

My Life in the Bush of Ghosts. Eno’s long-term collaboration with the Talking Heads, a new wave band made up of art students inspired by Roxy Music, began with their second album, 1978’s More Songs About Buildings and Food. Eno produced two more albums for the Talking Heads, most notably Remain in Light in 1982. Later, however, his relationship with the band soured, although he remained friends with Talking Heads front man Byrne. In 1981 Byrne and Eno released My Life in the Bush of Ghosts, an album comprising recordings of radio broadcasts and other found recordings, sounds made with random objects such as frying pans and cardboard boxes, and complex African and South American rhythms that would later be termed world music beats. Solidly within Eno’s oeuvre, the album was an early indication of the direction in which Byrne’s solo career would proceed.

Apollo: Atmospheres and Soundtracks. This 1983 album is one of Eno’s best-known ambient recordings. His younger brother, Roger Eno, and the producer, musician, and composer Daniel Lanois collaborated on the writing, production, and music. It was originally composed to accompany a filmed collage of footage from the U.S. Apollo space program called For All Mankind. However, the film was not released until 1990, when National Geographic issued one nonnarrative version with Eno’s music and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) released another version, replacing the sound track with interviews and commentary. The music evokes both the Western frontier and the final frontier of space. Lanois’s performance adds a flavor of country music to the recording, and the combination of acoustic and electronic sounds has a complex, mesmerizing quality. A seminal album of the genre, it may be considered a primer on ambient music.

Nerve Net. In 1992 Eno returned to a more rock-inflected sound with this album. Several guests, including Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers’ drummer Benmont Tench, guitarist Robert Quine, and Led Zeppelin multi-instrumentalist John Paul Jones, contributed to the tracks. “My Squelchy Life,” a song Eno had recorded earlier for a more pop-oriented album he never released, made it onto Nerve Net. The album received mixed reviews, but it was notable for foreshadowing the wave of techno rock that soon became popular.

Musical Legacy

A founder of ambient music and a pioneering electronic musician, Eno has recorded a large number of albums since the early 1970’s, ranging from solo pop efforts, to ambient recordings, to collaborations with some of the most influential and respected artists in rock. His production work, or what his management company calls sound landscaping, is recognizable on the recordings of musicians as diverse as Jane Siberry and U2. Eno’s creative drive led him to a variety of endeavors. He composed the six-second set of notes that accompanied the start-up of Microsoft’s Windows 95 operating system. In the mid-1990’s he collaborated with software engineers to create a computer program that would compose music; his software album Generative Music I was a product of it. His video artwork and installations have been displayed around the world, and his theories about creativity and the artistic process have reverberated not only with musicians but also with visual artists and writers.

Further Reading


Dayal, Geeta. Brian Eno’s Another Green World. London: Continuum, 2007. This slender volume is one of a series in which authors take an in-depth look at a particular album.

Eno, Brian. A Year with Swollen Appendices: The Diary of Brian Eno. London: Faber and Faber, 1996. This diary, written by Eno during 1995, traces his music and ideas, with a few details on his personal life.

Mills’s visual interpretations, and the essays by Poyner examine the artistic process.

Prendergast, Mark, and Brian Eno. The Ambient Century: From Mahler to Trance, the Evolution of Sound in the Electronic Age. New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2001. This history of sound and electronic music from classical music through rock and roll includes a foreword by Eno.


See also: Bono; Bowie, David; Byrne, David; Cage, John; Collins, Phil; Gabriel, Peter; Petty, Tom; Reich, Steve; Satie, Erik; Simon, Paul.

Enya
Irish New Age and Celtic singer and songwriter

Enya’s musical style seamlessly blends the emotional lyricism of New Age music with classical and Celtic folk forms.

Born: May 17, 1961; Gweedore, Donegal, Ireland
Also known as: Eithne Patricia Ní Bhraonáin (birth name); Eithne Brennan
Member of: Clannad

Principal recordings


The Life
Eithne Patricia Ní Bhraonáin, known as Enya (EHN-yah), was born into a large musical family in County Donegal, Ireland. Her grandparents and father performed in Irish folk music bands, and her mother was a music teacher at an Irish-speaking school. After studying piano and classical music, Enya began her career in the early 1980’s as a keyboardist and background vocalist in her family’s popular Irish band, Clannad. Leaving the group after only two years to pursue a solo career, Enya participated in several minor projects before being commissioned to score a 1986 BBC documentary, The Celts.

Though the sound track for The Celts was released in 1987, Enya did not gain major attention until the release of Watermark in 1988. After that, her career and international reputation climbed, primarily through the release of several Grammy Award-winning solo albums and through the use of her music in television shows and films. In 1996 Enya moved into Manderley Castle in County Dublin, Ireland.

The Music
Enya’s music is often categorized as New Age for its emotionally lyrical and ethereal quality. However, it also exhibits the characteristics of classical music and of traditional Celtic folk tunes, specifically the Irish sean nós (old style). Equally important is her signature method of combining multiple layers of recorded instruments (primarily keyboards) with those of her voice (both as soloist and as choir), a process that results in richly colored, lavish orchestrations and dense vocal textures. As a consequence of this process, live performances of her music are virtually impossible. This, coupled with her private nature, explains why Enya rarely appears in public as a performer.

Although considered a solo artist, Enya owes much of her success to longtime friends Nicky Ryan (producer) and his wife Roma Ryan (lyricist), the three having worked closely on nearly all aspects of Enya’s career since her departure from Clannad. In particular, Roma Ryan’s highly poetic and sometimes elusive lyrics—in such languages as English,
Gaelic, Latin, Welsh, French, and Spanish, as well as those created by J. R. R. Tolkien and Ryan herself—play a significant role in Enya’s music.

**Early Works.** Though written as the sound track to the BBC documentary *The Celts*, the self-titled *Enya* is generally regarded as the artist’s first solo album. It includes such popular tracks as “The Celts,” “I Want Tomorrow,” and “Boadicea.” The release of her second album, *Watermark*, brought Enya international fame. Featuring such hits as “Storms in Africa” and “Orinoco Flow,” *Watermark* established the artist’s successful formula of including both instrumental and vocal numbers on every album.

**Shepherd Moons.** In addition to placing at the top of European and American music charts, *Shepherd Moons* won the Grammy Award for Best New Age Album. The influence of traditional Irish music is more prominent on *Shepherd Moons* than on *Watermark*, particularly on such tracks as “Ebudae” and “Smaointe. . . .” Notable are the songs “Caribbean Blue” and “Book of Days” and Enya’s arrangements of the traditional hymn tune “How Can I Keep From Singing?” and the aria “Marble Halls” from the nineteenth century operetta *The Bohemian Girl* (1843) by Michael Balfe and Alfred Bunn. *Shepherd Moons* has guest musicians, including Steve Sidwell on cornet and Liam O’Flynn on uilleann pipes (Irish bagpipes).

**The Memory of Trees and A Day Without Rain.** Garnering Grammy Awards for Best New Age Album, these albums contained little new in terms of musical vocabulary, but they were immensely successful commercially. Both albums feature entirely original music, with *The Memory of Trees* including such popular tracks as “Anywhere Is,” “Hope Has a Place,” “Once You Had Gold,” and “On My Way Home.” The individual offerings on *A Day Without Rain* are overall not as noteworthy, the entire album instead creating a singular mood, with the exception of the hits “Wild Child” and “Only Time.” The latter song became especially popular following the attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2001.

**Amarantine.** *Amarantine*, which won a Grammy Award for Best New Age Album in 2007, is derived from the Greek word amarantos, referring to a flower that never fades. Enya charts no new musical territory, this album being slightly more sedate than her previous releases. Notable, however, is the use of Japanese lyrics in the song “Sumiregusa (Wild Violet)” and lyrics in Loxian—a language invented by Roma Ryan—in such tracks as the upbeat “The River Sings.” *Amarantine* is Enya’s first album not to include any lyrics in her native Gaelic. All of the remaining songs are in English, including the title track and “It’s in the Rain,” and the album features the moody instrumental “Drifting.”

**Musical Legacy**

Enya is often considered a popular Celtic musician, although her composing and singing style is closer to New Age music. Working slowly, she meticulously crafts each of her compositions to be immediately appealing and emotionally satisfying, even after repeated hearings. She has garnered numerous honors, not only for her solo albums but also for such projects as her Academy Award-nominated song “May It Be,” written for director Peter Jackson’s motion picture *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001). Though rarely ap-
pearing in public as a performer, and despite her somewhat static development as a composer, Enya has attracted a large, loyal fan base, and she has built an outstanding international reputation.

Frederick Key Smith

Further Reading


Forbes, Michelle. “Enya at Ease.” *World of Hibernia* 6, no. 3 (2000): 74. This interview with Enya, which takes place in her castle, covers her career and her music.


White, Timothy. “Enya: ‘Memory,’ Myth and Melody (Music to My Ears).” *Billboard* (November 25, 1995): 5. Though focused on her album *The Memory of Trees*, the article provides insight into the connection between Enya’s music and her Celtic heritage.

See also: Kitarō; Vangelis; Yanni.

Melissa Etheridge

American rock and country singer, songwriter, and guitarist

Etheridge is a rock singer-songwriter known for her raspy renditions of songs with soul-baring, passionate lyrics.

Born: May 29, 1961; Leavenworth, Kansas

Also known as: Melissa Lou Etheridge (full name); Missy Etheridge

Principal recordings


The Life

Melissa Lou Etheridge (ETH-rihj) was born to schoolteacher John Etheridge and his wife Elizabeth in Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1961. She describes her family as supportive but not warm or loving. As a teenager, she performed with various cover bands in Kansas, often in bars, chaperoned by her father. After high school she enrolled at Berklee College of Music in Boston, but she soon returned home to earn enough money to move to Los Angeles. She headed to Southern California in 1982, and over the next several years she developed a following by playing at women’s bars. Longtime manager Bill Leopold discovered Etheridge at Vermie’s bar in Pasadena, and after Island Records owner Chris Blackwell heard her sing at Que Sera in Long Beach, Etheridge signed a contract with the label.

Etheridge publicly came out as a lesbian at the Triangle Ball following President Bill Clinton’s inauguration in 1993. Her public announcement brought her relationship with longtime partner Julie Cypher to the forefront. The pair met in 1988, when Cypher was the assistant director for Etheridge’s first music video and still married to actor Lou Diamond Phillips. Cypher and Etheridge split in 2000, but they had two children (daughter Bailey, born in 1997, and son Beckett, born in 1998), fathered by singer David Crosby through artificial insemination. In 2001 Etheridge became romantically involved with actress Tammy Lynn Michaels, who gave birth to twins in 2006 (son Miller Steven and daughter Johnnie Rose), fathered by an anonymous sperm donor through artificial insemination. In October, 2004, Etheridge was diagnosed with breast cancer, which she successfully battled with chemotherapy, and she began performing again in 2005.

The Music

Etheridge’s personal life is tied inextricably to her music, which has often—but not always—worked to her benefit. From an early age she used music as an emotional outlet from her stifled family life, retreating to the basement to write songs. As Etheridge says in her autobiography, “a string of nonmonogamous relationships” led to a “bunch of really good songs.” Etheridge’s first five albums—
Melissa Etheridge

Melissa Etheridge, Brave and Crazy, Never Enough, Yes I Am, and Your Little Secret—went platinum or multiplatinum. Her later albums—Breakdown, Skin, and Lucky—never reached that success. She came back, however, to win the Academy Award for Best Original Song in 2007 for the rock anthem “I Need to Wake Up,” written for Al Gore’s documentary about global warming, An Inconvenient Truth (2006). The Oscar-winning song is included on a 2007 rerelease of Etheridge’s 2005 album Greatest Hits: The Road Less Traveled. Later, The Awakening, recorded after her recovery from breast cancer, showed Etheridge at a creative peak, exploring life from a new, hard-won perspective. Although The Awakening is a more relaxed, mature effort than her earlier work, she delivers it with her trademark passion, conviction, and humor.

Melissa Etheridge. Etheridge’s self-titled debut album featured the singles “Like the Way I Do,” “Similar Features,” and the Grammy Award-nominated hit “Bring Me Some Water.” The last song centers on an infectious, bluesy guitar riff, with Etheridge singing that she is “burning alive” with jealousy. Although the Grammy Award went to Tina Turner, Etheridge’s live performance at the awards show led to a huge increase in her visibility and her record sales, and her follow-up album, Brave and Crazy, was also well received.

Never Enough. The cover photograph for Etheridge’s 1992 album Never Enough featured the singer topless with her back to the camera, receiving almost as much attention as the music. The album incorporated some dance music, and in general it was more tightly produced than its somewhat raw predecessors. The techno sound of “2001” and the mellow pop of “Dance Without Sleeping” offer glimpses of these new sounds, and Etheridge won her first Grammy Award for “Ain’t It Heavy,” an empowering, guitar-driven rock anthem more true to her roots.

Yes I Am. Although the title track to Etheridge’s wildly popular 1993 album is not specifically about her sexuality, the bold statement became synonymous with her coming out as a lesbian earlier that year. The album featured songs that became huge hits: “If I Wanted To,” “I’m the Only One,” and “Come to My Window,” the last of which earned a Grammy Award and catapulted her into superstardom. “Come to My Window” is a haunting rock ballad about a woman desperately trying to reach her lover. Although Etheridge’s autobiography indicates that the song relates to a difficult time in her relationship with Cypher, the universal theme mirrors many listeners’ experiences. Etheridge’s follow-up album, Your Little Secret, was also a hit, but Yes I Am stood as a definitive statement.

Musical Legacy

While rarely described as musically innovative, Etheridge made music that exemplifies her rock-and-roll roots, and she remained committed to it in the face of divergent popular trends. Her willingness to bare her soul and share her personal journey makes her compelling to her fans. In addition to her music, Etheridge supports many causes—human rights and environmental issues in particular—making her an important role model.

Further Reading


_______. “Melissa’s Secret.” Rolling Stone 833 (2002): 40-45. This attention-getting article reveals singer Crosby to be the father of Etheridge and Cypher’s child, and it explores the relationships involved.

Etheridge, Melissa, with Laura Morton. The Truth Is...: My Life in Love and Music. New York: Random House, 2001. This is Etheridge’s refreshingly candid and modest account of the events that shaped her life and her music. Includes numerous family and personal photographs.


See also: Crosby, David; Lang, K. D.
Bill Evans

American jazz pianist and composer

A major contributor to the development of modern jazz, Evans is noted for his harmonic inventions in the context of jazz piano. He recorded more than fifty albums as a leader and received five Grammy Awards.

Born: August 16, 1929; Plainfield, New Jersey
Died: September 15, 1980; New York, New York
Also known as: William John Evans (full name)
Member of: The Bill Evans Trio

Principal recordings


The Life

William John Evans was born to Harry and Mary Evans in the middle-class suburban setting of Plainfield, New Jersey. His musical interests began at the age of three while listening to his older brother Harry’s piano lessons. Before he reached the age of seven, Evans had started lessons of his own, later recalling, “From the age of six to thirteen, I acquired the ability to sight-read and to play classical music.”

By the time he attended North Plainfield High School, Evans had established an unrivaled thirst for the contemporary Western European repertoire, namely the works of Darius Milhaud, Claude Debussy, and Maurice Ravel. Around the same time, Evans was introduced to the big band recordings of Tommy Dorsey and Harry James. The freedom to improvise, as found in the jazz idiom, excited Evans; consequently, he turned his attention to performing in the technically complex piano style of boogie-woogie. His sight-reading skills led to his first professional performing opportunities. He began playing at weddings and dances while still in high school.

In September, 1946, Evans accepted a scholarship to Southeastern Louisiana University at Hammond, located fifty miles from the birthplace of jazz, New Orleans. In 1950 Evans graduated with bachelor’s degrees in piano performance and music education and moved to New York City to pursue a performance career. One of his earliest experiences was with a trio led by guitarist Mundell Lowe, who subsequently brought Evans’s playing to the attention of Orrin Keepnews of Riverside Records.

New Jazz Conceptions, Evans’s first recording under his own name, was made on September 27, 1956. He was accompanied by Teddy Kotick on bass and Paul Motian on drums; this trio format of piano, bass, and drums would be one in which Evans would musically thrive. His later trios, especially with bassist Scott LaFaro and Motian, would ultimately transcend the prescribed role of merely keeping time to establish polyphonic, contrapuntal textures.

In April, 1958, Evans joined the sextet led by trumpeter Miles Davis. This experience provided
great exposure for the young pianist and consequently augmented his professional viability. The following year, while still with Davis, Evans participated in the seminal recording of Davis’s Kind of Blue, one of the best selling jazz albums of all time. Exhausted from the Davis association, Evans left the band to launch his career as a leader.

Evans found in LaFaro and Motian musical companions who subscribed to his conception of a three-way musical dialogue. In 1959 they began their exploration in earnest. Sadly, this kinship would be torn by the accidental death of LaFaro in July, 1961 (just days after their groundbreaking live recording at the Village Vanguard).

The remainder of the 1960’s consisted of triumphs and struggles for Evans. He managed to reform his trio with a new bassist, continued to record and compose original compositions, won the critics’ poll in Down Beat magazine for pianist of the year, toured the world, and sank into heroin addiction.

In the 1970’s Evans secured a recording contract with Columbia Records and, later, Fantasy Records. He continued to tour and seemed to be in something of a musical revival, invigorated by his musical companionship with such artists as bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Joe La Barbera, along with his newest addiction, cocaine. In 1980 his health rapidly declined, and in September Evans passed away, his death hastened by an unattended bleeding ulcer and acute liver disease.

The Music
Perhaps one of Evans’s greatest contributions to the tradition of jazz was his unique approach to the conventional trio of piano, bass, and drums: He encouraged his accompanists to maintain a musical dialogue rather than simply propel the rhythm. Understanding Evans’s trios leads to a true appreciation of his musical contribution.

Portrait in Jazz. Evans’s first trio consisted of himself, bassist LaFaro, and drummer Motian. In their first recording, Portrait in Jazz, Evans approached the piano in an uncharacteristically percussive fashion with florid melodic lines, complex harmonies, and a tense, swinging rhythm; LaFaro and Motian offset Evans’s intensity with a combined pensiveness. This was most evident in the album’s first track, “Come Rain or Come Shine.” The record also featured two original compositions by Evans, “Blue in Green” (often wrongly attributed to Miles Davis) and “Peri’s Scope,” named after Evans’s girlfriend Peri Cousins.

Sunday at the Village Vanguard. On June 25, 1961, the trio performed at the famed Village Vanguard and the material would be subsequently released as the album, Sunday at the Village Vanguard. This recording illustrated the trio’s maturity and the increased freedom given to LaFaro. The performance, which opened with his composition “Gloria’s Step,” displayed the bassist’s vast
creativity and command of his instrument as he juxtaposed melodic lines with Evans. The intense interplay continued throughout the set and perhaps reached its apex on the George Gershwin tune “My Man’s Gone Now.” An additional album of material from the Vanguard performance would be released as Waltz for Debby.

After the death of LaFaro, Evans faced the challenge of replicating the spontaneous collaboration with a new trio. Although he would find a competent instrumentalist in bassist Chuck Israels, a true sense of cohesion was not secured until the connection with bassist Eddie Gomez. This association would last from 1966 through 1977.

Conversations with Myself. Among the most innovative of Evans’s career, this album found the pianist employing the technical advances of multi-track recording. The repertory was typical Evans fare, including the jazz standard “Stella by Starlight” and the Thelonious Monk composition “‘Round Midnight.” The unconventional treatment of each tune was the ingenuity: Evans overdubbed himself three times, each take separated to a different channel—left, right, and center. This gave the pianist the opportunity to have a conversation with himself. His efforts were rewarded with a 1963 Grammy Award.

The Bill Evans Album. During the spring of 1971, Evans’s second recording date under the Columbia Records label spawned The Bill Evans Album. Music mogul Clive Davis insisted that his jazz artists incorporate electric instruments into their playing, an attempt to make jazz more accessible and commercially viable. Although Evans would go on to suggest that the electric pianos, such as the Fender Rhodes, could never capture the nuance of an acoustic piano, the effort was not fruitless. The album went on to win two Grammy Awards and allowed Evans to experiment with the new timbres of the instrument. Additionally, Evans had the opportunity to augment his trio setting with string and woodwind sections.

The Tony Bennett/Bill Evans Album. It was a rare occasion when Evans broke from the comfortable environment of the trio. During the summer of 1975, he joined vocalist Tony Bennett for their first duet recording. This album illustrates the pianist’s tremendous versatility in artistically supporting the vocalist while remaining true to his creative vision. The set consisted of the likely ballads “My Foolish Heart” and “But Beautiful,” along with the midtempo tune “When in Rome.” Evans’s “Waltz for Debby,” traditionally an instrumental, was performed by Bennett with lyrics by Gene Lees.

Turn Out the Stars. Evans’s last appearances at the Village Vanguard in June, 1980, and his penultimate recording date resulted in Turn Out the Stars: Final Village Vanguard Recordings, with Evans accompanied by the members of his final trio, Johnson and La Barbera. This unrivaled cohesive unit articulated a barrage of moods and textures and was the most uniquely collaborative since the trio of Evans, LaFaro, and Motian. On the album, Evans exudes a youthfully powerful approach on up-tempo tunes and his characteristically introspective playing on ballads such as “Polka Dots and Moonbeams.”

The Last Waltz. Evans’s final recordings were made from August 31 through September 7, 1980, just days before his death. Todd Barkan, the owner of Keystone Korner (the San Francisco jazz club that hosted Evans’s last appearance), recorded on tape the weeklong engagement. Each set was a well-balanced collection of jazz standards and original Evans tunes. On many of the songs, there exists a sense of urgency—perhaps because of the pianist’s comprehension of his physical deterioration. His left-hand passages are more florid and rhythmically complex than his earlier approach, yet he maintains a three-way dialogue with Johnson and La Barbera. The trio, acting as a single entity, displays great contrast during the slower jazz waltz “Gary’s Theme.”

Musical Legacy

Evans was one of the most influential jazz musicians of the post-bebop era. His exceptionally refined touch, advanced harmonic conception, and insistence on the equally expressive roles of his accompanists left an indelible mark on subsequent generations. Pianists such as Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock, Keith Jarrett, Fred Hersch, and Brad Mehldau exhibit the influence of Evans in their playing. Like many jazz artists before him, Evans succumbed to a horrific struggle with drug addiction—cutting short his life and robbing the public of brilliance yet to come.

Michael Conklin
Further Reading


See also: Bennett, Tony; Corea, Chick; Davis, Miles; Debussy, Claude; Getz, Stan; Hancock, Herbie; Jarrett, Keith; Legrand, Michel; Ligeti, György; McPartland, Marian; Powell, Bud; Ravel, Maurice.

Don and Phil Everly
American rock and country singers, songwriters, and guitarists

With their two-part harmony singing style and their open G-string guitar tuning, the Everly Brothers introduced Appalachian music, rockabilly, and blues into rock music.

Don Everly
Born: February 1, 1937; Brownie, Kentucky
Also known as: Isaac Donald Everly (full name)

Phil Everly
Born: January 19, 1939; Chicago, Illinois
Also known as: Phillip Everly (full name)
Members of: The Everly Brothers

Principal recordings
ALBUMS (as the Everly Brothers): The Everly Brothers, 1958; The Real Everly Brothers, 1958; Songs Our Daddy Taught Us, 1958; The Fabulous Style of the Everly Brothers, 1960; It’s Everly Time, 1960; Rockin’ with the Everly Brothers, 1960; Both Sides of an Evening, 1961; A Date with the Everly Brothers, 1961; Souvenir Sampler, 1961; Christmas with the Everly Brothers, 1962; Folk Songs of the Everly Brothers, 1962; Instant Party!, 1962; The Everly Brothers Sing Great Country Hits, 1963; Gone, Gone, Gone, 1964; Beat and Soul, 1965; Price of Love, 1965; Rock ‘n’ Soul, 1965; In Our Image, 1966; Two Yanks in England, 1966; The Everly Brothers Sing, 1967; The Hit Sound of the Everly Brothers, 1967; Roots, 1968; Chained to a Memory, 1970; Stories We Could Tell, 1972; Don’t Worry Baby, 1973; Pass the Chicken and Listen, 1973; Evryls, 1975; The New Album: Previously Unreleased Songs from the Early Sixties, 1977; EB ’84, 1984; All They Had to Do Was Dream, 1985; Home Again, 1985; Born Yesterday, 1986; Some Hearts, 1989; Thirty-one Unforgettable Memories, 1997; Christmas with the Everly Brothers and the Boys Town Choir, 2005; Give Me a Future, 2005; Too Good to Be True, 2005.


ALBUMS (Phil, solo): Star Spangled Springer, 1973; Phil’s Diner, 1974; Mystic Line, 1975; Living...
The Lives

Isaac Donald and Phillip Everly (EH-vur-lee) were born into an accomplished and established musical family. Don, the older brother, was born in Kentucky on February 1, 1937; Phil was born in Chicago on January 19, 1939. Ike Everly, their father, and his brothers, Charles and Leonard, were singers and musicians who moved from the coal-mining community of Muhlenberg, Kentucky, to Chicago in order to make a living as a country-blues group. Although they were successful, Ike decided he did not want to raise his sons in Chicago, and so in 1944 he moved his family to rural Iowa.

In Iowa, Ike hosted a live radio show that featured Little Donnie, age eight, and Baby Boy Phil, age six, singing and playing guitar. Many famous musicians played on the show, and the boys sang and performed with them live. They became the special favorites of Chet Atkins, already a major figure of the Nashville music community. He was instrumental in getting them established in Nashville, and he arranged their Grand Ole Opry debut in 1954.

In 1954 Don got his first break as a songwriter, with “Thou Shalt Not Steal,” recorded by Kitty Wells. In 1955 Don and Phil signed their first recording contract, but they had little success until 1957, when they signed with Cadence Records. Again, Atkins proved indispensable to their career, by insisting that Cadence allow the brothers to record a demo, despite the failure of their first album. From 1957 until 1961, the Everly Brothers could be heard on pop, country, and rock-and-roll radio stations, turning out multiple million-selling hits for Cadence Records.

In 1961 the brothers split from their longtime manager, Wesley Rose, and Cadence Records, and this started a decade-long slump during which their five-year history of producing Top 20 hits ended. They joined the U.S. Marines for a year, and when they were discharged in 1962, they found their music no longer relevant because of the rising influence of the folk revival and the coming British Invasion, when rock-and-roll and pop performers from England, among them the Beatles, gained popularity in the United States.

In 1966 the Everlys went to England, where they had always enjoyed success, and they recorded an album featuring the Hollies as back-up, with Jimmy Page and John Paul Jones, soon to form Led Zeppelin, appearing as studio musicians.

The Everlys’ last album of new material appeared in 1973. During the tour to promote this album, long-simmering tensions boiled over, and during a concert Phil smashed his guitar and stormed off the stage, leaving Don to finish solo. Because of Don’s drug addiction and alcoholism, and their unresolved feud, they stopped performing together until 1983. The Reunion Concert at the Royal Albert Hall, a great success, was made into an HBO film special. In 1984 they were back on the charts, singing a song written by Paul McCartney.

The Everlys perform occasionally, and Don continues to write music. They try to appear at the annual Muhlenberg Agricultural Fair. Phil started the Everly Music Company, designing and producing quality guitar and banjo strings. They appear as guests on many country and rock albums, notably singing back up for Paul Simon’s *Graceland* (1986). In 2005 they had a successful tour in England.

The Music

The Everlys grew up singing gospel, country, and Appalachian folk music along with their father and his brothers. The Everly Brothers became famous for their beautiful harmonies, with Don singing lead and Phil taking high harmony. Don began writing music, selling songs as a teenager to famous Nashville singers such as Patsy Cline, but the brothers got their big break with “Bye Bye Love,” written by Felice and Boudleaux Bryant. They continued to record the Bryants’ songs as well as write their own. For five years they dominated the charts. In the mid-1960’s, as they were losing favor in America because of the British Invasion, they continued to chart in England, and they produced some of their most sophisticated work, such as “Gone, Gone, Gone” and “The Price of Love.” Their songs are characterized by perfect harmonies, country roots-inspired guitar playing, and intricate chord patterns, all of which helped bridge the gap between country and pop and led the way for rock and roll.

“Bye Bye Love.” This was the Everly Brothers’ first hit. The song, written by the Bryants, was turned down by thirty singers before the Everlys
decided to record it. Atkins worked a deal with Cadence Records owner Archie Bleyer, who allowed the brothers to record “Bye Bye Love” as an audition demo. An expert at open G-string tuning, Don composed a six-second guitar introduction, and the song became a legend. It became the signature format for the Everly Brothers: guitar introduction by Don; two-part harmonies, with Phil taking the high parts; and solos in the middle taken by Don. “Bye Bye Love” was their first million seller.

“Wake Up, Little Susie.” This follow-up to “Bye Bye Love,” also by the Bryants, was the Everly Brothers’ second million seller. The harmonies combined close-third intervals with country-inspired fifths and sixths, making the song more musically sophisticated than “Bye Bye Love.” It was a hit on several charts, and its focus on teenage problems made it an undeniable success with young listeners. Although banned in Boston for suggestive lyrics, the song was a number-one hit in America and overseas.

**Songs Our Daddy Taught Us.** This album, rereleased many times since 1958, featured the Everlys singing traditional country and Appalachian music, playing a stand-up bass and an acoustic guitar. It was a departure from the teen-angst pop songs that had made them famous and a return to their roots. *Rolling Stone* awarded it four out of five stars for its faithful interpretation of important roots music.

“Let It Be Me.” This was the Everlys’ first non-Nashville recording. Don had heard the melody of this French song played by Atkins, and the brothers recorded this version with English lyrics in 1960. This was one of the first pop songs to use a string section, and it was the final record produced before their break with Rose-Acuff music. “Let It Be Me” proved to be one of their most enduring hits.

“Cathy’s Clown.” The split from Rose-Acuff music meant that the Everlys could no longer record songs by the Bryants, who had written almost all of their hits. “Cathy’s Clown,” written by Don with help from Phil, was the first single produced while under contract with Warner Bros. It included a sixth level of harmony, Phil’s new addition to the Everly Brothers’ style. It was the biggest single of their career.

**All They Had to Do Was Dream.** All the tracks on this album are alternate versions of songs recorded between 1957 and 1960 for Cadence Records. This is an interesting album because it comprised all the songs that became big hits for the Everlys, but with different arrangements.

**Later Music.** The Everlys have recorded almost thirty albums, none of which was a big seller in America despite receiving good reviews and containing both originals and covers. *Rock ‘n’ Soul* and *Gone, Gone, Gone* were both popular in England. *Two Yanks in England* and *In Our Image* also did very well in England, and they featured British musicians such as the Hollies and Page. These were not nostalgic or old fashioned; they were sophisticated and imbued with rock sensibilities. Nevertheless,
they did not promote the duo’s image back in the United States. Pass the Chicken and Listen was the last album of new material for a decade. After their feud and reunion, the Everlys produced three albums containing new material: EB ’84, Born Yesterday, and Some Hearts. Too Good to Be True and Give Me a Future contain previously unreleased songs from their early career in the 1950’s and 1960’s.

Musical Legacy
The Everlys‘ primary contribution to rock and roll is their country-music style harmony singing. Rock singers coming after the Everlys owe them a debt of gratitude. John Lennon and Paul McCartney once billed themselves as the Foreverly Brothers. Listed at number thirty-three in Rolling Stone’s Top Immortals of All Time, the Everlys were called the greatest rock duo of all time. Their singing has influenced and has been openly acknowledged as influential by Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel, Dave Edmonds, Gram Parsons, Linda Ronstadt, and others. This influence can be heard in many American groups, such as the Flying Burrito Brothers, the Byrds, Buffalo Springfield, Poco, and the Eagles, as well as in British groups such as the Hollies, Nick Lowe, the Buckinghams, and the Bee Gees.

Equally important is Don’s impact on rock guitar playing. The introduction to “Bye Bye Love,” played using open G-string tuning, changed the way rock and roll sounded. Although played on an acoustic guitar, the large-bodied Gibson created a powerful sound and became the foundation for rock power chords. Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones credits Don Everly with creating the rock guitar sound, and Richards, as do most rock guitarists, uses the same tuning for many of his songs.

As testament to their lasting influence on rock and roll, the Everly Brothers received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Recording Academy, and they were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame; the Country Music Hall of Fame; the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame; the Iowa Rock ‘n’ Roll Music Association’s Hall of Fame; and the Vocal Group Hall of Fame.

Further Reading
Hosum, John. Legends: The Everly Brothers, the History of the Everly Brothers on Record, an Illustrated Discography. Seattle, Wash.: Foreverly Music, 1985. This provides stories about the Cadence Records years, but very little about any of their other recording history.

See also: Atkins, Chet; Garfunkel, Art; Lennon, John; McCartney, Sir Paul; Page, Jimmy; Richards, Keith; Simon, Paul; Travis, Merle.